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SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY DOBRIANSKY'S MEETING WITH EGYPTIAN
MINISTER OF HEALTH AND POPULATION

¶1. (U) Summary. In a meeting on the margins of the 6th International Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, Egyptian Minister of Health and Population Hatem El Gabaly reviewed for U/S Paula Dobriansky his support for an international agreement to coordinate efforts for influenza virus sharing and vaccine development, and concerns about stagnant international organizations and avian influenza in Africa. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On October 25, on the margins of the 6th International Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza in Sharm El Sheikh, Minister of Health El Gabaly met with U/S Dobriansky accompanied by Ambassador John Lange, Dr. Daniel Miller (HHS) and representatives of Embassy Cairo. El Gabaly described his vision for an international agreement on principles to address policy issues related to avian influenza virus sharing to be signed by both developed and developing countries. Those principles would be: 1) equal rights for all countries to acquire a pandemic vaccine; and 2) sharing of virus samples between countries affected by the virus and countries that produce the vaccine. He believed such an agreement would address concerns of countries such as Indonesia that view U.S. policies as unfair and inequitable. He was confident that the Indonesians would support such an initiative.

¶3. (U) El Gabaly said it was important for international donors to focus more on Africa and to establish a WHO Collaborating Center in Africa beyond the WHO centers already established in Australia, Japan, UK and U.S. (HHS/CDC Atlanta). He indicated that African countries trust the GOE and that Egypt has already provided doctors to African countries in fields such as combating malaria. U/S Dobriansky agreed that Egypt can play a great role in bringing Africa into the AI effort.

¶4. (SBU) El Gabaly described international organizations, such as the WHO, as stagnant and said they need a "shake up" in the same way that financial institutions have had to reevaluate their operations during difficult times. He proposed that Egypt and the U.S. address the issue of enforcing discipline in international organizations such as the WHO, which he considers excessively bureaucratic and politically stagnant. He complained that WHO activities in Egypt, such as workshops and seminars, have had a minimal impact and are not an efficient use of resources. El Gabaly said he was disappointed in the relationship between the WHO and GOE in Cairo and in the organization as a whole. U/S Dobriansky agreed to carry El Gabaly's message back to Washington and indicated that the U.S. will try to coordinate with Egypt in its efforts.

¶5. (SBU) Noting that, at the last G8 Summit, countries pledged \$60 million to the development of health services in Africa, El Gabaly asked about the current status of donor assistance in the health sector and expressed his concern that no action to program the pledged G8 funds has been taken

as of yet. He reiterated Egypt's ability to make a difference in Africa. U/S Dobriansky responded that health was indeed an important area for the G8 countries and that health ministers have been working together on the issue since the summit. She highlighted USAID's role in the health sector in Africa, but agreed that other members of the G8 have not been as active. Dr. Miller told El Gabaly that the agency is fully supportive of the G8 initiative and has been focused on the expansion of current activities such as PEPFAR training programs. He stated that existing mechanisms and channels should also be embraced as opportunities for expanding influence.

¶16. (U) El Gabaly highlighted the importance of women's issues and Egypt's role in providing training to physicians and health personnel through the Suzanne Mubarak Regional Center for Women's Health and Development in Alexandria. Groups from all over Africa are trained in Egypt. El Gabaly argued that the center's activities are in line with HHS objectives, and suggested HHS could tackle more issues if it looked at existing resources in Egypt such as the center. He mentioned that Egypt will host a global conference on gender equality in 2010 and hopes to make a formal announcement shortly.

¶17. (U) In light of the current financial crisis, Minister El Gabaly expressed his concerns about potential impacts beyond the financial sector. If current problems are not examined and addressed, then "AAA institutions are going to become FFF." Reform of international organizations should be focused on revising organization charters, military order, finances, and organization size. He believes that when the U.S. and Egypt work together, they have more influence on outcomes. He also believes that the U.S. has played a

significant role in aligning world views on AI since the December 2007 New Delhi conference and in preparing for the Sharm el-Sheikh conference by embracing lessons learned. U/S Dobriansky stated that the U.S. will continue to support the GOE in its efforts.

¶18. (SBU) Note: In a meeting that also included Minister of Agriculture Abaza and that took place shortly before he met with U/S Dobriansky, El Gabaly told Ambassador Lange, UN System Influenza Coordinator David Nabarro, WHO Assistant Director General Paul Gully, and ministerial or sub-ministerial representatives from Indonesia, Namibia, Malawi and Mauritania, that Egypt is willing to mediate the dispute between the developing and the developed world over the sharing of viruses and benefits. He proposed that delegates meet and agree, by the end of the conference on October 26, on an international agreement/framework under a UN umbrella to coordinate efforts for influenza virus sharing and vaccine development. He said that benefits such as vaccines should be distributed on an equal basis. Nabarro told El Gabaly that any such effort needed to be "synchronized" with the process already underway that is leading up to the WHO meeting in December. Ambassador Lange discussed the ongoing talks between Indonesia and the U.S., the two nations at the center of the dispute, and the importance of the WHO Intergovernmental Meeting in December in Geneva. Indonesia's Bayu Krisnamurthi stressed the importance of increasing vaccine production capacity and of early detection, surveillance and response. Subsequent meetings on the margins of the conference on this subject were inconclusive, as most countries in attendance preferred to leave the virus/sample sharing issue to the WHO forum. The GOE, in its concluding document, Vision for the Future, highlighted the importance of resolving the issue in the December meeting at WHO. End note.

¶19. (U) This cable has been cleared by U/S Dobriansky.
SCOBAY